Dutch-Palestinian Cooperation Forum

Joint Statement

Today, December 7, 2013, the Prime Minister of the Netherlands, Mr. Mark Rutte, and the Palestinian Prime Minister, Dr. Rami Hamdallah, note with satisfaction the excellent mutual relations, which are rooted in historic ties of friendship and cooperation in many areas and on many levels.

Following the Joint Declaration issued by Prime Minister Dr. Rami Hamdallah and Minister of Foreign Affairs Frans Timmermans in Ramallah on 18 June 2013, the Prime Ministers opened the first edition of the "Dutch-Palestinian Cooperation Forum", which serves as an expression of the longstanding friendship.

The Forum provides a framework for initiating and cultivating private sector led initiatives, exchange between knowledge institutions as well as an opportunity for regular political dialogue on a range of issues relating to bilateral relations and developments in the international arena and the Eastern Mediterranean and Middle Eastern regions.

The two Governments have decided that the Forum's principal objective is to strengthen bilateral relations by increasing cooperation in the field of innovation and by bringing together relevant representatives from the government, private sector, knowledge institutions and civil society to explore new fields for mutual benefit.

The Forum will continue to be convened every two years at ministerial level, alternately hosted by either side. These meetings will be led by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs. The Forum will be supported by a flexible and results-oriented system of technical working groups, which will explore opportunities for increasing cooperation with respect to innovation in food security and agro-technology, water technology, energy, as well as Information and Communications Technologies. It will also provide ideas and establish contacts for more targeted, smaller-scale activities, to be pursued subsequent to bi-annual meetings of the Forum. During this first edition of the Forum, it has been agreed, inter alia, that:

Government to Government

- The various working groups, under the general guidance of the Representative Office of the Netherlands in Ramallah and the Palestinian General Delegation in The Hague, will ensure follow-up and implementation with regard to the outcomes of today's four business seminars on food security and agro-technology, water technology, energy, as well as Information and Communications Technologies.

- The Netherlands will provide assistance to the Palestinian Ministry of Agriculture of and other stakeholders to introduce the World Trade Organisation's framework on sanitary and phytosanitary standards (SPS), with a view to facilitating international trade in Palestinian food and food products.

- VNG International, the International Cooperation Agency of the Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG) and the municipality of Rawabi have signed an agreement to establish city-to-city exchange of best practices on the basis of the needs of Rawabi municipality and Support capacity development in the municipal organization of Rawabi in the fields of municipal management, service delivery, Smart city and strategic planning.

- Vitens Evides International and the Palestinian Water Authority have entered into an Operational Partnership Agreement, to exchange valuable institutional, organizational, and technical knowledge, share and transfer operational experience and showcase novel technologies in order to improve upon the overall

performance of Palestinian Water Authority to regulate the sector and to enhance the performance of the utilities and raise the creditworthiness of Palestinian water utilities.

Business to Business

- The Dutch-Palestinian Business Council has been established, to bring Dutch and Palestinian companies together and to provide a platform to encourage other companies to explore the various business opportunities.

- The Centre for the Promotion of Imports from Developing Countries (CBI), on the basis of the value chain analysis it conducted, will assist the Ministry of Agriculture and other stakeholders to develop an export and marketing strategy for the Palestinian horticulture sector, and support this industry to increase its exports to the EU as well as markets in the region.

- The Centre for the Promotion of Imports from Developing Countries (CBI), on the basis of its value chain analysis mission, will assist key-stakeholders in the Palestinian ICT-sector including the Ministry of Telecommunications & Information Technology, and the Palestinian Information Technology Association of Companies to develop marketing and export strategy for the Palestinian ICT-sector.

- In the energy sector, the Palestinian and Dutch energy businesses and academia identified opportunities for cooperation for the development and exchange of business and energy know-how.

Knowledge to Knowledge

- A Palestinian-Dutch consortium of 10 universities will perform joint research and to improve the individual, organizational and institutional capacity of the Palestinian higher education sector towards contributing to the effectiveness of the Palestinian water sector regarding the development, provision and management of water resources and services in close coordination with the Palestinian Water Authority according to its Mandate.

- The Netherlands Institute of International Relations 'Clingendael' and the Palestinian Society for the Study of International Affairs 'Passia' signed an Agreement of Cooperation on exchange and cooperation in the field of international relations.

The two Governments welcome the two productive days of political and business consultations which not only underline the friendship and longstanding partnership, but which also provide an excellent basis for future work and a further deepening of bilateral ties.

Signed in Bethlehem on 7 December 2013, in two original copies, in the English language.

H.E. Dr. Rami Hamdallah	**H.E. Mr. Mark Rutte**
Palestinian Prime Minister	Prime Minister of the Netherlands